



The Vacation

Polly Horvath

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From the author of the Newbery Honor Book *Everything on a Waffle*

When his mother decides on a whim to be a missionary in Africa and drags his unwilling father with her, Henry is left in the care of his Aunts Magnolia and Pigg. Henry's sure they dislike him and he's trying to keep his distance, but that becomes more difficult when Mag decides they should take a destination-less road trip. Mag, convalescing from an illness that makes her look like death, is downright crabby. Pigg, tense from driving, is becoming more assertive and less willing to submit to Mag's whims. And while they poke each other - literally - Henry is finding it hard to keep his resolution.

They go to Virginia Beach (it's too hot); try camping in the Everglades (Henry accidentally spends four days floating in a swamp); visit their daddy, Henry's granddaddy (Henry's never met him!); and lose Pigg to love in Oklahoma (what would the radio psychologist Daly Kramer say?) before they finally receive word that Henry's parents are coming back and will meet them in Tulsa to finish the trip with Mag and Henry. But his parents are bickering and Henry is in despair - until he surrenders to the road and decides to let whatever happens happen, but to be there in it all.

Complete with her signature cast of eccentric characters, absurd situations, and heartfelt moments, Polly Horvath writes an on-the-road epic like no other!

The Vacation Details

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From Reader Review The Vacation for online ebook

Nanda says

Leí una traducción en español. La edición tenía algunos dibujos, pero créalo o no, el ilustrador omitió el tan relevante mapa de los Estados Unidos, sin tener en cuenta que la serie en la que este libro fue publicado está dirigida a niños de habla hispana.

Por otro lado, los niños no hablan como Henry lo hace. Es una voz madura, ni en broma tiene doce, y petulante.

Christopher says

Henry is left in the caretaking of two his two aunts: Aunt Mag, and Aunt Pigg when his mother decides to travel to Africa to pose as a missionary, and his father feels it would be best to follow. Henry and his aunts went on a road trip and tried to accomplish to travel across the United States to live their life. I did not find the plot of this book very interesting or eccentric at all to catch the reader you want to try to catch (6th-9th graders) , and then it all went downhill from there. The whole book keeps kids bored out of their minds because the same things are happening in the different states. Not that more interesting as you keep reading due to the conclusion being messed up and confusing for even me! (an 8th grader) I would not recommend this book to anyone as it was a very disappointing book! The whole book just needs a little more structure to make it better, I have not read any of her books before but I hope to soon to find out if the rest of the books are god, or bad. Im sorry for such a bad reading but I am very unsatisfied

Kaeli Wood says

just as valid as on the road; in fact more so because instead of being with all your pretentious friends who you do hard drugs with, you're hanging out with your aunts and they're pressuring you to eat deep fried clams

Sarah Sammis says

<http://pussreboots.pair.com/blog/2015...>

Debbie says

Grade 6-9— Horvath spins another delightfully offbeat yarn, complete with her signature cast of eccentric characters, wacky situations, poignant moments, and snappy dialogue. Twelve-year-old Henry's mother decides on a whim to be a missionary in Africa and drags his father along, leaving Henry in the care of his aunts, Magnolia and Pigg, for several months. Mag, turning 40 and recovering from an obscure disease, decides that they need a vacation. They embark on a destination-less car trip that feels more like a

kidnapping to the boy. The aunts bicker and are nasty. Virginia Beach is too hot. In the Everglades, Henry accidentally spends four days floating in a swamp with an autistic boy. Pigg falls in love with a cowboy in Oklahoma and stays there. During the trip, they receive word that Henry's mother followed a chimp into the bush and got lost. She's finally found, but Henry's father contracts malaria. Eventually, word comes that the parents will meet Mag and Henry in Tulsa to finish the trip. Unfortunately, Henry's parents are either fighting or not speaking. Although at first he works hard to get them to see one another as he sees them, he finally realizes that he is not responsible for their happiness or their problems. Horvath again introduces a young person who is parentless for some reason and who is put in the care of distant, idiosyncratic relatives who change the child's perception of life. This latest book, like its predecessors, bounces from the hilarious to the heartrending. Funny, but not my favorite book.

Jim Erikson says

This was a great read-aloud. I so enjoy when Polly Horvath puts her effort into drawing the characters in all their humanity even if it paints her into some strange plot corners. I don't know if I even remember what really happened for most of the book, but I do remember laughing out loud over and over at the way Henry and his aunts said things. When Henry realized that he preferred his 'unpleasant' people to the milquetoast folks they met near the end, it felt good to agree. This is one of the great things about experiencing unpleasantness in books--I can agree with Henry in principle, but then be glad I'm not actually in the family in the book. Unpleasant people and situations are also so much more interesting and tolerable when the writing is funny!

nicole says

First of all, I love Polly Horvath. I really do. And maybe I would be saying this about another book instead of this one, had I read them in a different order, but still it must be asked: how many books is she gonna write about bizarro aunts!? Woman's got the chops, let's explore some new territory.

That said, this is a fun summer read, and I LOVED the beginning of the book in particular. I was amused from page one. The middle was so-so. Enjoyable enough, but I felt like I was reading aimlessly while they traveled (mostly) aimlessly. And I kept getting Pigg and Mag mixed up. They were different people, but only in largely superficial ways. Pigg eats salad, Mag got sick and is really lazy. I just had to keep reviewing those two facts to keep them straight but in the end they sounded the same. Mostly acted the same. They were the same, and it was a little tiring constantly trying to recall who was who when it didn't really matter anyway. Then the end, when Pigg/Peg left and Henry's parents came back, things started to get truly interesting. Tense, but good. When Henry's father said that he "never wanted to speak to" his wife again I was surprised. Like, wow, they're gonna handle this like real people who really get pissed off. Not like in some kids book. And that was great. But then the ending. Just ended. I didn't need resolution, but I needed to at least know that there was gonna be more conflict, but instead she seemed to pick some pretty line she probably had stockpiled. "I don't know. I don't know. How can you not love it all? And then we drove endlessly, endlessly over the gentle crests. A sign said: Welcome to Iowa".

...what does that MEAN? He doesn't know what? Love what? I mean, I get that you're tired and happy after the baseball game, after finally spending some time with your family without everyone constantly

complaining, but... are we to assume things were somehow okay after that? Frustrating.

But OVERALL, an enjoyable story. Henry makes some great insights (and taught me a couple new words), and of course, of course, of course there were funny, uncomfortable moments. I like that Horvath isn't afraid to let her characters be cranky and real. But I don't know that I'm in any hurry to read *The Corps of the Bare Boned Plane* now. I just don't think I can do another off-beat book about off-beat aunts for a while.

Mahoghani 23 says

This book concerns a young man name Henry that's 12 years old and his parents go to Africa on a missionary trip and left him in the care of his mom's sisters, Aunt Pig & Aunt Magnolia. They decide to redecorate Henry's family home to include painting all the rooms in the house. Their next adventure includes driving across the country on a family vacation. There are so many hilarious and crazy issues during this trip that it will provide a clear view of this family's disposition.

The book is from Henry's point of view and so it's from the young mind of an adolescent. The aunts are not the best people to leave a child to care for. They're more into themselves than worrying about what's in the best interest for Henry.

Sarah says

Odd but satisfying read. Even though the events of the story are a bit out there as far as realism goes the feelings and themes about family dysfunction and road trips were quite relatable. Heads up for mentions of disordered eating.

Biz says

Great book! I listened to it on tape and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Int'l librarian says

This book is a very extended bout of silly, with a strong Roald Dahl vibe of cynicism. There's a bit of plot and message here too. Any book with a chapter titled "Cat-Squishing Day" has to have its serious side. That's good enough for me, but the average middle grader might find it all a bit too strange and rambling.

Henry is 12 years old, and his parents have abandoned him for the summer. His Mom wants to help people in Africa, somehow. She tries to convert to Mormonism, because they sponsor lots of missionaries, but the Mormons reject her. So she figures she'll tell people she's a Mormon anyway and see how far that gets her. Dad agrees to join her on the trip because, well... that one's harder to figure. He seems to want to see for himself how misguided and flighty his wife is, and then get the chance to say "I told you so."

It's a near impossible premise, but it fits with the ridiculous nature of so much else in this book. Henry has

two aunts who agree to take care of him. But that doesn't mean they have to care about him. "Please go away, little boy." That's Aunt Magnolia's reaction when Henry offers to make her some tea. The same sentence could serve as Mag's universal response to Henry's existence. And yes, that quote still makes me smile when I read it now.

I have another favorite scene when Aunt Mag finally figures out what has been making her sick, and her sister, Aunt Pigg, attempts to sympathize.

"At least you can eat again," said Aunt Pigg. "You can have some lovely chocolate birthday cake."

"Don't want any," said Aunt Magnolia, lying on the bed. "I'm just going to lie here and bleed."

"Well, almost anything would improve the color of those slipcovers," said Aunt Pigg.

Just like the best of Roald Dahl, the adults are hopelessly crusty and/or clueless. And it's up to Henry to set the moral tone. I'm OK with that too. But even I got impatient with the listless progress.

And I wish Henry didn't identify himself as an elementary student. That sets the bar even lower for target reader ages. It's hard to imagine many pre-teens and tweeners with the determination to reach the end of this road. But if you can make it far enough, it might be worth knowing that I laughed a lot on cat-squishing day. Strange strange strange.

Jenny says

Unfortunately, I did not find the characters in this book likable nor the plot very interesting. Near the end, the narrator Henry gets fed up and yells, "How did I end up with all you unpleasant people?". Then he thinks, "It did seem as if every last person I loved was simply unbearably unpleasant and that I really should have been born into a nicer family.". Yep. That about summed it up...they weren't evil or dastardly or real villains, but they were unpleasant and fairly selfish. And the book consists of him taking a long vacation with his aunts while his parents are in Africa so his mom can pretend to be a Mormon missionary (despite the fact that she is neither Mormon nor a missionary of any kind), a fact that is supposed to be funny but that fell rather flat for me. And the vacation is mostly them driving and eating and staying in motels. Other than the adventure in the swamp (which I still felt was underdeveloped) nothing much happens.

Bridget R. Wilson says

[Wonderful as per usual. If you want to laugh, pick up a book by Horvath (except *The Canning Season*):]

When Henry's mom unexpectedly decides to become a missionary, his parents travel to Africa leaving him in the care of his aunts Magnolia and Pigg. The aunts don't like children so they spend a large part of their time ignoring Henry. This is fine with him. He endures their stay from the comfort of his closet until the aunts decide to redecorate the house. Even his closet isn't safe from their design schemes. After Magnolia's illness, the three set off on a vacation. And what a vacation it is. With no destination in mind, they simply go where they want when they want. In the meantime, Henry's mom gets lost in Africa and his dad contracts malaria.

To say the very least, it is an eventful summer.

What I Thought: Horvath does not disappoint. I expected to be amused and I was. I liked this book because it was from Henry's point-of-view. All Horvath's other books either revolve around a female protagonist or a family. The Vacation was a pleasant change. I was also glad to see whatever the aunts' faults, they did keep Henry in books.

Rick Stuckwisch says

Well, this was an interesting book. Not necessarily one of Polly Horvath's best, but certainly not bad. A bit quirky and whimsical, but that is to be expected with this wonderful author. And the way in which it peaks into a little slice of "ordinary, ever day life," so to speak, while yet describing a series of unusual and extraordinary events, is also typical of her books. She has a real knack for seeing and understanding things from a child's perspective, while not shying away from the hard and harsher side of life in the world. She lets the tensions be what they are, and she teases them to the surface, while also providing perspective on those challenges. In this case, the story commends the wise art of being fully present in the moment, wherever you may be at the time. And yet, it also suggests that each individual person is likely to engage and interact with the world and with others quite differently. There is no cookie cutter version of what a person is to be or to be like. But I did appreciate the way in which the ending underscored the importance of personal integrity, and not depending on others for one's own contentment, happiness, attitude, and outlook. Worthwhile reading.

Kyle Weiscopf says

The vacation is a story where Henry one of the main characters in this story. Henry's parents want to go to Africa where Henry's dad gets malaria. His aunts visit Peg and Mag they go on a road trip first stop they visit Virginia beach, Next was Florida, Kansas, Mount Rushmore, then Colorado Lastly Iowa. Henry gets lost in Florida in a swamp. Then Henry gets to meet up with his parents again. Sadly they are crossed with Mag and Pegg. Then they are on their way to South Dakota mount Rushmore this is when the characters change there attitude jurassicly. Next when they go to Iowa Henry's dad runs over a cat named Benny. Then they meet other people because they spend the night with them. Then the neighbor feeds that family's horse spaghetti which pretty soon spoiler alert the horse dies. The family is heart broken. One reason to why I loved this book was because it was sort of sad and funny at the same time there was part that were upsetting than funny parts too. Sometimes I was left on Irony I wanted to know what was going to happen. This was really good I recommend reading it! Plus it was worth about 7.0 AR points.
